Worksheet: Conducting a Successful SWOT Analysis Meeting

Step 1 – Explain the Process

Since time is usually at a premium for meeting participants, it is important that the participants understand why they are at the meeting and what the expected outcomes of the meeting are.

- Explain that the purpose of the meeting is to conduct a SWOT Analysis of the agency's workforce. Define SWOT Analysis as the ***process of documenting the agency's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats***.
- Explain how your agency will use the outcome of the meeting – that the results are important because the information will serve as a foundation for the agency's workforce and strategic/business planning.
- Before beginning the business part of the meeting, establish meeting ground rules (an agreed upon set of norms on how the meeting will be conducted):

Sample Meeting Ground Rules

Teams meeting to complete a SWOT Analysis should develop ground rules that define how team members want the meeting to be conducted. Ground rules help promote meeting efficiency and member participation. The ground rules should be developed and agreed upon by the team members at the start of the meeting. Ten of the most common meeting ground rules include:

1. Respect each other and refrain from making personal attacks.
2. Acknowledge that it is OK to disagree.
3. Listen to others, don't interrupt.
4. Everyone participates; no one dominates, value the diversity of team members.
5. Honor time limits: be on time, start on time, end on time
6. Recognize that all ideas are potentially good ideas, don't rush to evaluate suggestions; keep an open mind.
7. Stick to the agenda – stay on task. Usually the meeting leader or another designated individual serves as a facilitator and is responsible for facilitating the meeting and keeping it on task and on time.
8. Be prepared for the meeting by reviewing materials distributed beforehand and bringing any requested materials with you
9. Respect confidentiality, what is said in the meeting should stay in the meeting.
10. Make arrangements to not be interrupted during the meeting; turn off cell phones.

Step 2 – List Strengths

Develop a list of all of the internal strengths of the agency incorporating feedback from the team members, emails and surveys. Discuss the strengths and clarify any questions or confusion. Examples of strengths could include an experienced staff or good employee training program.

Step 3 – Identify Weaknesses

Repeat the process you used to identify strengths to generate a list of the agency's weaknesses. Weaknesses are internal factors that may impact workforce planning negatively. Examples of weaknesses could include an absence of procedural manuals or lack of an employee mentoring program. It is possible that a strength could also be a weakness. For example, long-time employees could be a strength because of their experience, but may be a weakness because it might indicate a workforce close to retirement.

Step 4 – List Opportunities

Repeat the process to list opportunities. Opportunities are external factors, as opposed to the internal factors of strengths and weaknesses. Opportunities could include new relevant training programs at educational institutions or an emerging diverse workforce.

Step 5 – Identify Threats

Repeat the process to identify threats. Threats are also external factors. Threats could have a negative impact on your workforce planning and could include a projected increase in the cost of employee health insurance or an expected reduction in government funding. Again it is possible that an opportunity may also be perceived as a threat. For example, new technology tools might be an opportunity, but also threaten staffing levels.

Step 6 – Establish Priorities

You will have four lists once you've identified your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Use a prioritization process to reduce each of the four lists to five top priorities. Two options for doing this are:

1. Give each person in the group five sticky dots and have them place the dots beside the options they prefer. They can choose five individual options or place multiple dots on an option they feel strongly about. The option with the greatest number of dots will determine the course of action.
2. Ask participants to rank the options using a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 points represents their first choice, 4 their second choice, etc. The desired option is the one that accumulates the highest total score.

On the next page is a *Sample Completed SWOT Matrix* with five top priorities for workforce planning for a human services agency.

Sample Completed SWOT Matrix

Strengths (internal)	Weaknesses (internal)
1. The agency has an experienced and dedicated workforce 2. There is a good training program for new employees 3. Senior management is committed to workforce planning 4. Human resource staff are easy to work with and willing to try new recruitment ideas 5. 50% of the staff hold a professional certification	1. Over 50% of the managers and supervisors are eligible for retirement 2. The agency does not offer a mentoring program 3. The agency lacks the technology tools to be more efficient 4. Procedural manuals need to be updated 5. The current workforce is not very racial/ethnic diverse
Opportunities (external)	**Threats (external)**
1. New information technology tools can provide quicker data sharing between agencies and client information retrieval 2. There are job sharing opportunities with other agencies 3. A large number of retired baby boomers are considering returning to the workforce on a part-time basis 4. Federal and state agencies have expressed interest in merging services 5. Universities are looking for internship opportunities for their students	1. The demand for workers in the field exceeds the supply of potential workers 2. There is less federal money available for training grants 3. Budget and full-time positions have been limited by the legislature 4. Educational institutions are reducing the number of courses offered in this field 5. The number of residential treatment centers has been declining steadily

Step 6 - Discuss Next Steps

The next step begins the process of turning the results of the Environmental Scan and SWOT Analysis into something actionable. Encourage group discussion about the four prioritized lists by asking:

- How can we maximize the use of our strengths?
- How can we overcome the threats identified?
- What do we need to do to overcome the identified weaknesses?
- How can we take advantage of our opportunities?

Explain to the team members that the results of their efforts will be incorporated in the agency's business and workforce planning in the form of action plans.

Guidelines: Conducting Effective and Efficient Meetings

When meeting to complete a SWOT Analysis or to conduct other business, the most productive meetings are those that are run effectively and efficiently. Below are some universal tips to help any meeting run more smoothly.

1. Distribute the agenda prior to the meeting. Define the purpose of the meeting, list the agenda items and time allotments, and include any reference materials that should be reviewed prior to the meeting.
2. Write the agenda and meeting goals on a blackboard or flipchart in the meeting room. This will help keep the team members focused on the tasks at hand. Follow the agenda, start on time and end on time.
3. Your meeting should have a facilitator, either the meeting leader or another designated individual. The role of the facilitator is to keep the discussion focused on the topic, stay on the agenda, and stay on time. It would be very easy for a meeting on workforce planning to turn into a meeting with participants discussing everything about the organization. The facilitator controls the meeting by establishing time limits, listing specific agenda items, defining the purpose of the meeting, and controlling the discussions.
4. Make introductions, have team members introduce themselves and tell where they work or what they do.
5. Use a warm-up activity, sometimes called an icebreaker. This activity serves two purposes: 1) it promotes participation and communication; and 2) it encourages team work and team building.
6. Have the team members develop and agree upon meeting ground rules. These agreements establish norms for participant behavior and define how the meeting will be conducted.
7. Encourage participation from all team members and ensure that no one team member dominates the discussion. Brainstorming can be used to generate ideas, remember that during brainstorming ideas should not be evaluated or criticized.
8. Determine how decisions will be made. There are a number of methods to make decisions ranging from voting to building consensus. A majority vote decision method requires support from more than 50% of the members of the group and can be accomplished through voting, either by a show of hands or written secret ballot. The following prioritization techniques can also be used to arrive at the option that the majority supports:

   - Give each person in the group five sticky dots and have them place the dots beside the options they prefer. They can choose five individual options or place multiple dots on an option they feel strongly about. The option with the greatest number of dots will determine the course of action.
   - Participants are asked to rank the options using a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 points represents their first choice, 4 their second choice, etc. The desired option is the one that accumulates the highest total score.

- When simple voting may result in some unhappy team members, a consensus decision method strives to avoid "winners" and "losers". Consensus requires that a majority approve a given course of action, but that the minority agree to go along with the course of action. All team members don't need to favor the decision, but all team members need to be able to live with the decision and support it.

9. Keep the discussion focused on the agenda items to avoid investing time where team members discuss items that are extraneous to the agenda. The comments may be interesting, but they are not likely productive to the meeting's goals.
10. Park issues that are important, but unrelated to the specific agenda in a "Parking Lot" by recording them on the flipchart or blackboard for future consideration or agendas.
11. Prior to adjourning the meeting summarize the results and conclusions from the meeting; record any actions or assignments, who is responsible to complete them, and timeline for each action.
12. Use a check-out to end the meeting. A check-out is an opportunity for team members to share their thoughts on how the meeting went, what worked well and what could be done to improve future meetings.